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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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State Dept. review completed

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THE ARAB-ISRAELI SITUATION

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1. BRITISH BELIEVE EARLY MILITARY ACTION NECESSARY ON SUEZ

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[Redacted] Top British government officials believe military action will be necessary in the Suez situation. They are not prepared, moreover, to delay "appreciably" in forcing a showdown, according to the American embassy in London.

The British doubt that Nasr can be persuaded to accept any adequate international arrangement to operate the canal that would demonstrate that he has been prevented from making good his seizure. They consider the prospects good for swift success in a military operation confined to Egypt and believe such action would be welcomed in the Middle East by Tunisia, Libya, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Iraq.

Government officials tend to ignore the increasing strength of public opposition to the use of military force, apparently in the belief that the current situation is a historic turning point for Britain requiring that the government take a forceful course regardless of the consequences.

Comment

While a number of Arab leaders would greet Nasr's downfall with private satisfaction, they would find a concomitant increase of British power and prestige unwelcome.

**2. ITALY MAY MAKE DEMARCHE TO NASR URGING
CAUTION ON SUEZ ISSUE**

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Premier Segni told Ambassador Luce on 1 September that Italy wishes to make a demarche to Nasr on 5 or 6 September urging him to give careful consideration to the proposal on Suez being presented by the committee of five. Segni said he was concerned that Nasr might underestimate the united determination of the 18 powers. He fears that the British-French menace of force may make Nasr either reject the committee's proposals at once or draw out discussions for a long time, thereby running the risk that incidents at the canal or in Egypt would provide an excuse for military action.

Comment

The suggested demarche would probably have little influence on Nasr's position. Segni's proposal springs from Italy's desire to raise its prestige by active participation in the Suez affair.

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(Information as of 1700, 4 September)

Nothing of significance to report.

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